

## **CHAPTER XV - LITTLE EVA.**

Early in March Jimmy was again forced to part with his watch. As he was coming out of the pawn-shop late in the afternoon he almost collided with Little Eva.

"For the love of Mike!" cried that young lady, "where have you been all this time, and what's happened to you? You look as though you'd lost your last friend." And then noting the shop from which he had emerged and the deduction being all too obvious, she laid one of her shapely hands upon the sleeve of his cheap, ill-fitting coat. "You're up against it, kid, ain't you?" she asked.

"Oh, it's nothing," said Jimmy ruefully. "I'm getting used to it."

"I guess you're too square," said the girl. "I heard about that Brophy business." And then she laughed softly. "Do you know who the biggest backers of that graft were?"

"No," said Jimmy.

"Well, don't laugh yourself to death," she admonished. "They were Steve Murray and Feinheimer. Talk about sore pups! You never saw anything like it, and when they found who it was that had ditched their wonderful scheme they threw another fit. Say, those birds have been weeping on each other's shoulders ever since."

"Do you still breakfast at Feinheimer's?" asked Jimmy.

"Once in a while," said the girl, "but not so often now." And she dropped her eyes to the ground in what, in another than Little Eva, might have been construed as embarrassment. "Where you going now?" she asked quickly.

"To eat," said Jimmy, and then prompted by the instincts of his earlier training and without appreciable pause: "Won't you take dinner with me?" "No," said the girl, "but you are going to take dinner with me. You're out of a job and broke, and the chances are you've just this minute hocked your watch, while I have plenty of money. No," she said as Jimmy started to protest, "this is going to be on me. I never knew how much I enjoyed talking with you at breakfast until after you had left Feinheimer's. I've been real lonesome ever since," she admitted frankly. "You talk to me different from what the other men do." She pressed his arm gently. "You talk to me, kid, just like a fellow might talk to his sister."

Jimmy didn't know just what rejoinder to make, and so he made none. As a matter of fact, he had not realized that he had said or done anything to win her confidence, nor could he explain his attitude toward her in the light of what he knew of her life and vocation. There is a type of man that respects and reveres woman-hood for those inherent virtues which are supposed to be the natural attributes of the sex because in their childhood they have seen them exemplified in their mothers, their sisters and in the majority of women and girls who were parts of the natural environment of their early lives.

It is difficult ever entirely to shatter the faith of such men, and however they may be wronged by individuals of the opposite sex their subjective attitude toward woman in the abstract is one of chivalrous respect. As far as outward appearances were concerned Little Eva might have passed readily as a paragon of all the virtues. As yet, there was no sign nor line of dissipation marked upon her piquant face, nor in her consociation with Jimmy was there ever the slightest reference to or reminder of her vocation.

They chose a quiet and eminently respectable dining place, and after they had ordered, Jimmy spread upon the table an evening paper he had purchased upon the street.

"Help me find a job," he said to the girl, and together the two ran through the want columns.

"Here's a bunch of them," cried the girl laughingly, "all in one ad. Night cook, one hundred and fifty dollars; swing man, one hundred and forty dollars; roast cook, one hundred and twenty dollars; broiler, one hundred and twenty dollars. I'd better apply for that. Fry cook, one hundred and ten dollars. Oh, here's something for Steve Murray: chicken butcher, eighty dollars; here's a job I'd like," she cried, "ice-cream man, one hundred dollars."

"Quit your kidding," said Jimmy. "I'm looking for a job, not an acrostic."

"Well," she said, "here are two solid pages of them, but nobody seems to want a waiter. What else can you do?" she asked smiling up at him.

"I can drive a milk-wagon," said Jimmy, "but the drivers are all on strike."

"Now, be serious," she announced. "Let's look for something really good. Here's somebody wants a finishing superintendent for a string music instrument factory, and a business manager and electrical engineer in this one. What's an efficiency expert?"

"Oh, he's a fellow who gums up the works, puts you three weeks behind in less than a week and has all your best men resigning inside of a month. I know, because my dad had one at his plant a few years ago."

The girl looked at him for a moment. "Your father is a business man?" she asked, and without waiting for an answer, "Why don't you work for him?"

It was the first reference that Jimmy had ever made to his connections or his past.

"Oh," he said, "he's a long way off and--if I'm no good to any one here I certainly wouldn't be any good to him."

His companion made no comment, but resumed her reading of the advertisement before her:

WANTED, an Efficiency Expert--Machine works                      wants man  
capable of thoroughly reorganizing large                      business along modern lines,  
stopping leaks and                      systematizing every activity. Call International  
Machine Company, West Superior Street. Ask for                      Mr. Compton.

"What do you have to know to be an efficiency expert?" asked the girl.

"From what I saw of the bird I just mentioned the less one knows about anything the more successful he should be as an efficiency expert, for he certainly didn't know anything. And yet the results from kicking everybody in the plant out of his

own particular rut eventually worked wonders for the organization. If the man had had any sense, tact or diplomacy nothing would have been accomplished."

"Why don't you try it?" asked the girl.

Jimmy looked at her with a quizzical smile. "Thank you," he said.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," she cried. "But from what you tell me I imagine that all a man needs is a front and plenty of punch. You've got the front all right with your looks and gift of gab, and I leave it to Young Brophy if you haven't got the punch."

"Maybe that's not the punch an efficiency expert needs," suggested Jimmy.

"It might be a good thing to have up his sleeve," replied the girl, and then suddenly, "do you believe in hunches?"

"Sometimes," replied Jimmy.

"Well, this is a hunch, take it from me," she continued. "I'll bet you can land that job and make good."

"What makes you think so?" asked Jimmy.

"I don't know," she replied, "but you know what a woman's intuition is."

"I suppose," said Jimmy, "that it's the feminine of hunch. But however good your hunch or intuition may be it would certainly get a terrible jolt if I presented myself to the head of the International Machine Company in this scenery. Do you see anything about my clothes that indicates efficiency?"

"It isn't your clothes that count, Jimmy," she said, "it's the combination of that face of yours and what you've got in your head. You're the most efficient looking person I ever saw, and if you want a reference I'll say this much for you, you're the most efficient waiter that Feinheimer ever had. He said so himself, even after he canned you."

"Your enthusiasm," said Jimmy, "is contagious. If it wasn't for these sorry rags of mine I'd take a chance on that hunch of yours."

The girl laid her hand impulsively upon his.

"Won't you let me help you?" she asked. "I'd like to, and it will only be a loan if you wanted to look at it that way. Enough to get you a decent-looking outfit, such an outfit as you ought to have to land a good job. I know, and everybody else knows, that clothes do count no matter what we say to the contrary. I'll bet you're some looker when you're dolled up! Please," she continued, "just try it for a gamble?"

"I don't see how I can," he objected. "The chances are I could never pay you back, and there is no reason in the world why you should loan me money. You are certainly under no obligation to me."

"I wish you would let me, Jimmy," she said. "It would make me awfully happy!"

The man hesitated.

"Oh," she said, "I'm going to do it, anyway. Wait a minute," and, rising, she left the table.

In a few minutes she returned. "Here," she said, "you've got to take it," and extended her hand toward him beneath the edge of the table. "I can't," said Jimmy. "It wouldn't be right."

The girl looked at him and flushed.

"Do you mean," she said, "because it's my--because of what I am?"

"Oh, no," said Jimmy; "please don't think that!" And impulsively he took her hand beneath the table. At the contact the girl caught her breath with a little quick-drawn sigh.

"Here, take it!" she said, and drawing her hand away quickly, left a roll of bills in Jimmy's hand.